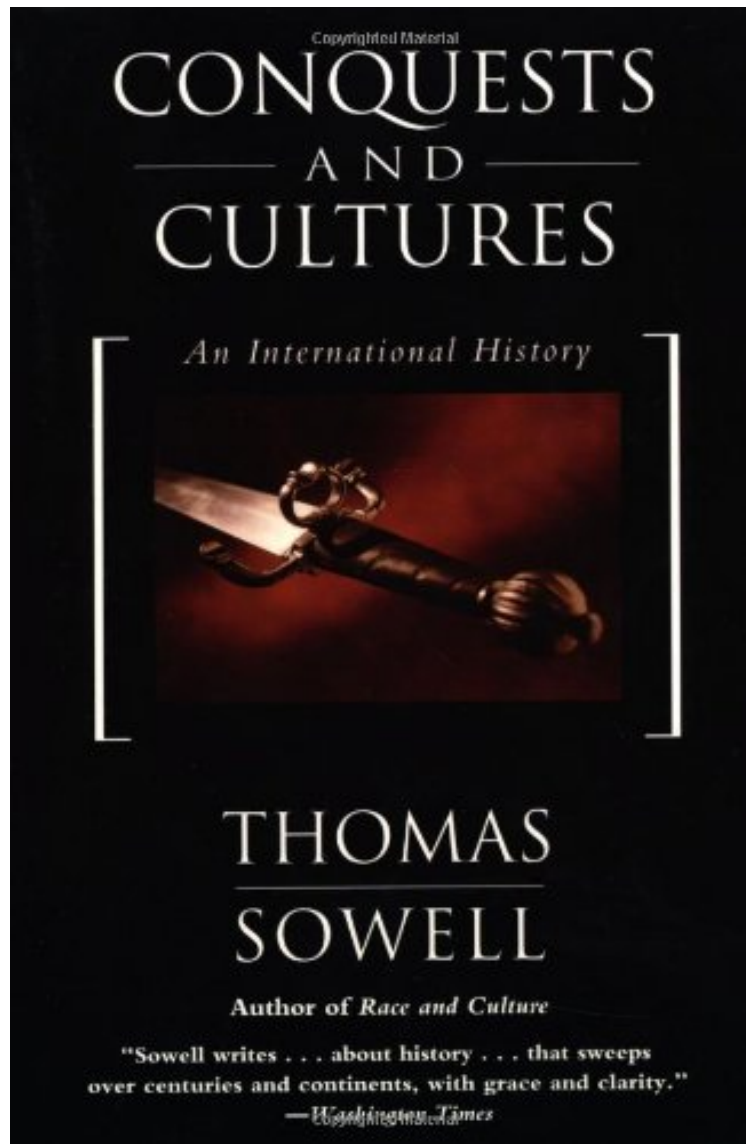


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Conquests and Cultures: An International History

Thomas Sowell

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Thomas Sowell : Conquests and Cultures: An International History before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Conquests and Cultures: An International History:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Good narrative and lots of data; sobering and sort of uplifting By Justin L Hopkins This book is a good historical narrative, backed up with lots of data, a steady (definitely not shrill) sense of ethics and an understanding of the scope of human behavior. I think modern people look back at conquest and colonization, and tend to dismiss it as all equally evil, without much analysis. We sometimes even prefer to not talk

about it. This does a disservice to understanding what actually happens. This book is a fascinating comparison of several different eras of conquest and colonization. I walked away with several great little lessons about history that are not at all obvious, among them: 1) When the imperial power withdraws, even peacefully, the colonies tend to become worse off, economically (and in some cases, much worse off). This is in part due to the exodus of human capital from the colony, and in part due to the retributions against those who stayed. Also, good governance is really hard and utterly non-intuitive. 2) Those pushing for independence from the colonial power tend to be natives newly-educated in the colonial power's system, while the locals who are least connected to the colonial power tend to be much more indifferent. 3) Some imperial powers spread, culturally and militarily, because local groups don't hate them nearly as much as they hate their neighboring tribes. A lot of narrators, influenced by the idea of the noble savage, regularly skip this. Animosity between neighbors can be severe. 4) There are many examples of groups of people, who, painfully aware of their backwardness, decided that enough was enough and that they were going to improve their lives. And some succeeded tremendously - as in the Scottish Enlightenment. Mr. Sowell argues that there are cases of people, disadvantaged by geography, history, and culture, who improve their lives far beyond what any sociologist or geographer would predict. I am not a historian, so I lack the specialization to deeply evaluate each case study in his narrative. But as a person who likes to read history, I found this readable, full of data, and persuasive. As a side note, Mr. Sowell writes about "negative human capital", which is very interesting, and deserving of more attention. I do not know if he originated the idea.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Sowell does a tour de force of the human history ... By J. Denning Sowell does a tour de force of the human history of the populated continents showing how climate, land forms, religious beliefs, and chance influenced the way human societies developed in various parts of the world. His thesis is probably open to question as any reference to historical trends would be, but he offers sound reasoning and facts for his conclusions. I was greatly enlightened, as I have been by all of Dr. Sowell's books.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Tells the truth about Slavery By Davidg1218 Excellent book by the good Doctor. Not a light read but chock full of goodies and worth the time. Discloses the ignorance surrounding the "Slave" issues and the grievance industry.

This book is the culmination of 15 years of research and travels that have taken the author completely around the world twice, as well as on other travels in the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and around the Pacific rim. Its purpose has been to try to understand the role of cultural differences within nations and between nations, today and over centuries of history, in shaping the economic and social fates of peoples and of whole civilizations. Focusing on four major cultural areas (that of the British, the Africans (including the African diaspora), the Slavs of Eastern Europe, and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere) *Conquests and Cultures* reveals patterns that encompass not only these peoples but others and help explain the role of cultural evolution in economic, social, and political development.

.com Another tour de force by one of America's leading public intellectuals. *Conquests and Cultures* continues in the tradition of Sowell's superb books, *Race and Culture* and *Migrations and Cultures*. The series attempts to understand the meaning of cultural differences, including how these differences have influenced the economic and social fates of civilizations, nations, and ethnic groups. This particular installment focuses on how military conquest both destroys culture and spreads it by examining the histories of the English, the Africans, the Slavs, and the indigenous people of the New World. Sowell rejects the cultural relativism that is currently so fashionable in the universities and forthrightly believes that some cultures--understood as "the working machinery of everyday life"--are clearly superior to others. He marshals a massive amount of scholarly material to support his ideas, and capably turns this mountain of data into straightforward prose. --John J. Miller From *Publishers Weekly*

Sowell presents this as the final volume in a trilogy that includes *Race and Culture* (1994) and *Migration and Culture* (1996). Like its predecessors, the book incorporates two principal themes: that racial, ethnic and national groups have their own particular cultures, and that those cultures are mutable. Sowell offers four case studies--the British, the Africans, the Slavs and the American Indians--in evidence for his argument that the antecedents, processes and consequences of conquest generate broad-spectrum interactions and responses. Cultures in contact with each other usually influence each other even if the matrix is based on domination/submission, he explains. Brutal conquests can lead to the spread of advanced skills. Cultural borrowing is accompanied by genetic diffusion, and both make a mockery of biological racism and behavioral stasis. The key distinction among human communities is, for Sowell, "human capital"--the spectrum of individual and collective learned behaviors that produce distinctive patterns of skills and attitudes. The positive form of this capital is based on flexibility--receptivity to cultural transfers and willingness to apply those transfers in different contexts. Sowell, an economist by training and a conservative by conviction, emphasizes the wealth-creating aspects of human capital and argues for the centrality of achievement to developing group self-esteem. He references his arguments to a wide range of sources from a broad spectrum of disciplines. Academic specialists are likely to join critics of Sowell's emphasis on cultural malleability in accusing him of using the tools of scholarship to support his preconceptions. Sowell's conclusion that the course of history is determined by what peoples do with their opportunities is nevertheless an emotionally and intellectually compelling challenge to determinism in all its variant forms, from Marxism to

multiculturalism. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Sowell, a scholar-in-residence at the Hoover Institution and author of several books in the social sciences, examines ways in which military victories throughout history have caused both conquerors and the conquered to change dramatically. The Roman and British Empires, several African tribes, Eastern European Slavs, and Western Hemisphere Indians are presented as civilizations that grew economically and culturally, or declined precipitously, as they clashed with foreign armies. Sowell's scholarship is evident as he examines the interplay of religion, language, education, technology, and other factors in the development of nations. An example is his discussion of the Slavic people as both victors and losers against Celts, Germans, Turks, and others. The third in a trilogy that includes *Race and Culture* (LJ 7/94) and *Migrations and Cultures* (LJ 3/1/96), this book bears comparison to Fernand Braudel's *A History of Civilization* (LJ 10/1/93). Its readable style and impressive scope make it suitable for all libraries. Norman Malwitz, Queens Borough P.L., Jamaica, NY Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.